

Press Information

Symposium in honor of Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. mult. Thomas C. Mettenleiter

President of the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut will retire by the middle of the year

Insel Riems, 28. February 2023. On June 30, 2023, the term of office of Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. mult. Thomas C. Mettenleiter as President of the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institute, FLI, will end after 27 years. On February 27, an international scientific symposium was held in his honor at the FLI headquarters on the island of Riems followed by an evening reception at the Alfried-Krupp-Wissenschaftskolleg in Greifswald. A total of 150 participants from Europe, Africa, and North America came together for the event. The keynote speech in the evening was given by the President of the Robert Koch Institute, Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. mult. Lothar H. Wieler.

During Prof. Mettenleiter's term of office, three FLI research sites were consolidated in one place, which was associated with the extensive expansion of the institute's headquarters on the island of Riems. The FLI sites in Tübingen and Wusterhausen were given up about 10 years ago and research work was transferred to the Baltic coast. In the course of the reorganization of consumer protection, the research site in Jena became part of the institution in November 2002. The two institutes at this site concentrate on the FLI's second infection biological research focus 'Bacteria'. In 2008, departmental research in the portfolio of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) was restructured and three further sites in Lower Saxony were incorporated into the FLI. Here, research is conducted in Braunschweig on animal nutrition, in Mariensee on farm animal genetics, and in Celle on animal welfare and animal husbandry. Headed by Prof. Mettenleiter, a total of 850 staff members are committed to animal health and the protection of humans from zoonoses.

Over time, the expertise of the FLI and above all that of Thomas C. Mettenleiter on various topics such as 'mad cow disease' (BSE), swine fever, fowl plague, and the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 was sought after by BMEL, the scientific community and the public. In recent years in particular, he has been a committed advocate of the One Health concept, which stresses the interplay of human, animal and environmental health. Since mid-2021, he has been co-founding chair of the international One Health

High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) consisting of 26 members together with Prof. Dr. Wanda Markotter, head of the Centre for Viral Zoonoses at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, who also attended the symposium. This expert panel was initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). After his retirement from office, Prof. Mettenleiter will continue his commitment for the topic One Health.

Thomas C. Mettenleiter is a virologist and molecular biologist who studied biology at the Eberhard Karls University Tübingen from 1977 to 1982. Already in his doctoral thesis, he dealt with herpesviruses in pigs. He received his doctoral degree in 1985. After a research stay in Nashville, USA, he obtained his Venia legendi in virology in 1990. From 1994 to 2019, he headed the Institute of Molecular Virology and Cell Biology at the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Federal Research Institute for Animal Health (FLI) on the island of Riems, since 1996 he has been President of the entire FLI.